

Conditionals

Conditional tenses are used to speculate about what could happen, what might have happened, and what we wish would happen. In English, most sentences using the conditional contain the word *if*. Many conditional forms in English are used in sentences that include verbs in one of the past tenses. This usage is referred to as "*the unreal past*" because we use a past tense but we are not actually referring to something that happened in the past. There are five main ways of constructing conditional sentences in English. In all cases, these sentences are made up of an *if* clause and a main clause. In many negative conditional sentences, there is an equivalent sentence construction using "*unless*" instead of "*if*".

Conditional sentence type	Usage	If clause verb tense	Main clause verb tense
*Zero	General truths	Simple present	Simple present
Type 1	A possible condition and its probable result	Simple Present	Simple Future
Type 2	A hypothetical condition and its probable result	Simple Past	Present Conditional Or Present Continuous Conditional
Type 3	An unreal past condition and its probable result in the past	Past Perfect	Perfect Conditional
Mixed type	An unreal past condition and its probable result in the present	Past Perfect	Present Conditional

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Type 1 Conditional

The *Type 1 Conditional* is used to refer to the **present or future** where the **situation is real**. The *Type 1 Conditional* refers to a possible condition and its probable result. In these sentences the if clause is in the simple present, and the main clause is in the simple future.

If clause	Main clause
If + Simple Present	Simple Future
If this thing happens	that thing will happen .
If you don't hurry	you will miss the train.
If it rains today	you will get wet.

In a *Type 1 Conditional* sentence, the tense in the 'if' clause is the simple present, and the tense in the main clause is the simple future.

If clause (condition)	Main clause (result)
If + Simple Present	Simple Future
If this thing happens	that thing will happen.

As in all *conditional sentences*, the order of the clauses is not fixed. You may have to rearrange the pronouns and adjust punctuation when you change the order of the clauses, but the meaning is identical.

Examples

- If it **rains**, you **will get** wet.
- You **will get** wet if it rains.
- If Sally **is** late again I **will be** mad.
- I **will be** mad if Sally **is** late again.
- If you **don't hurry**, you **will miss** the bus.
- You **will miss** the bus if you **don't hurry**.

Function

The *Type 1 Conditional* refers to a possible condition and its probable result. These sentences are based on facts, and they are used to make statements about the real world, and about particular situations. We often use such sentences to give warnings. In *Type 1 Conditional* sentences, the time is the **present or future** and the situation is **real**.



Examples

- If I **have** time, I'll **finish** that letter.
- What **will** you **do** if you **miss** the plane?
- Nobody **will notice** if you **make** a mistake.
- If you **drop** that glass, it **will break**.
- If you **don't drop** the gun, I'll **shoot**!
- If you **don't leave**, I'll **call** the police.

★ In *Type 1 Conditional* sentences, you can also use modals in the main clause instead of the future tense to express the degree of certainty, permission, or a recommendation about the outcome.

Examples

- If you **drop** that glass, it **might break**.
- I **may finish** that letter if I **have** time.
- If he **calls** you, you **should go**.
- If you **buy** my school supplies for me, I **will be able to go** to the park.

Type 2 Conditional

The *Type 2 Conditional* is used to refer to a time that is **now or any time**, and a situation that is **unreal**. These sentences are not based on fact. The *Type 2 Conditional* is used to refer to a hypothetical condition and its probable result. In *Type 2 Conditional* sentences, the if clause uses the *Simple Past*, and the main clause uses the *Present Conditional*.

If clause	Main clause
If + Simple Past	Present Conditional
If this thing happened	that thing would happen . (but I'm not sure this thing will happen)
If you went to bed earlier	you would not be so tired.
If it rained	you would get wet.
If I spoke Italian	I would work in Italy.

As in all conditional sentences, the order of the clauses is not fixed. You may have to rearrange the pronouns and adjust punctuation when you change the order of the clauses, but the meaning is identical.

Examples

- If it **rained**, you **would get** wet.
- You **would get** wet if it **rained**.



- If you **went** to bed earlier you **wouldn't be** so tired.
- You **wouldn't be** so tired if you **went** to bed earlier.
- If she **fell**, she **would hurt** herself.
- She **would hurt** herself if she **fell**.

Function

The *Type 2 Conditional* refers to an unlikely or hypothetical condition and its probable result. These sentences are not based on the actual situation. In *Type 2 Conditional* sentences, the time is **now or any time** and the situation is **hypothetical**.

Examples

- If the weather **weren't** so bad, we **would go** to the park. (But the weather is bad so we can't go.)
- If I **were** the Queen of England, I **would give** everyone a chicken. (But I am not the Queen.)
- If you really **loved** me, you **would buy** me a diamond ring.
- If I **knew** where she lived, I **would go** and see her.

It is correct, and very common, to say "if I *were*" instead of "if I was" (subjunctive mood).

Examples

- If I **were** taller, I **would buy** this dress.
- If I **were** 20, I **would travel** the world.
- If I **were** you, I **would give up** smoking.
- If I **were** a plant, I **would love** the rain.

In *Type 2 Conditional* sentences, you can also use modals in the main clause instead of "would" to express the degree of certainty, permission, or a recommendation about the outcome.

Examples

- We **might buy** a larger house if we **had** more money
- He **could go** to the concert if you **gave** him your ticket.
- If he **called** me, I **couldn't hear**.

Type 3 Conditional

The *Type 3 Conditional* is used to refer to a time that is **in the past**, and a situation that is **contrary to reality**. The facts they are based on are the opposite of what is expressed. The *Type 3 Conditional* is used to refer to an unreal past condition and its probable past result. In *Type 3 Conditional* sentences, the if clause uses the **Past Perfect**, and the main clause uses the **Perfect Conditional**.



If clause	Main clause
If + Past Perfect	Perfect Conditional
If this thing had happened	that thing would have happened . (but neither of those things really happened)
If you had studied harder	you would have passed the exam.
If it had rained	you would have gotten wet.
If I had accepted that promotion	I would have worked in Milan.

As in all conditional sentences, the order of the clauses is not fixed. You may have to rearrange the pronouns and adjust punctuation when you change the order of the clauses, but the meaning is identical.

Examples

- If it **had rained**, you **would have gotten** wet.
- You **would have gotten** wet if it **had rained**.
- You **would have passed** your exam if you **had worked** harder.
- If you **had worked** harder, you **would have passed** your exam.
- I **would have believed** you if you **hadn't lied** to me before.
- If you **hadn't lied** to me before, I **would have believed** you.

Function

The *Type 3 Conditional* refers to an impossible condition in the past and its probable result in the past. These sentences are truly hypothetical and unreal, because it is now too late for the condition or its result to exist. There is always some implication of regret with *Type 3 Conditional* sentences. The reality is the opposite of, or contrary to, what the sentence expresses. In *Type 3 Conditional* sentences, the time is the **past** and the situation is **hypothetical**.

Examples

- If I **had worked** harder I **would have passed** the exam. (But I didn't work hard, and I didn't pass the exam.)
- If I **had known** you were coming I **would have baked** a cake. (But I didn't know and I didn't bake a cake.)
- I **would have been** happy if you **had called** me on my birthday. (But you didn't call me and I am not happy.)

In *Type 3 Conditional* sentences, you can also use modals in the main clause instead of "would" to express the degree of certainty, permission, or a recommendation about the outcome.

Examples

- If I **had worked** harder I **might have passed** the exam.
- You **could have been** on time if you **had caught** the bus.
- If he **had called** you, you **could have gone**.



- If you **had bought** my school supplies for me, I **might have been able to go** to the park.

Mixed type conditional

The *Mixed Type Conditional* is used to refer to a time that is **in the past**, and a situation that is **ongoing into the present**. The facts they are based on are the opposite of what is expressed. The *Mixed Type Conditional* is used to refer to an unreal past condition and its probable result in the present. In *Mixed Type Conditional* sentences, the if clause uses the **Past Perfect**, and the main clause uses the **Present Conditional**.

If clause	Main clause
If + Past Perfect or Simple Past	Present Conditional or Perfect Conditional
If this thing had happened	that thing would happen . (but this thing didn't happen so that thing isn't happening)
If I had worked harder at school	I would have a better job now.
If we had looked at the map	we wouldn't be lost.
If you weren't afraid of spiders	you would have picked it up and put it outside.

Practice

A. First Conditional Exercise Put the verb into the correct first conditional form:

- If I _____ (go) out tonight, I _____ (go) to the cinema.
- If you _____ (get) back late, I _____ (be) angry.
- If we _____ (not / see) each other tomorrow, we _____ (see) each other next week.
- If he _____ (come), I _____ (be) surprised.
- If we _____ (wait) here, we _____ (be) late.
- If we _____ (go) on holiday this summer, we _____ (go) to Spain.
- If the weather _____ (not / improve), we _____ (not / have) a picnic.
- I _____ (come) early if you _____ (want).
- They _____ (go) to the party if they _____ (be) invited.
- She _____ (stay) in London if she _____ (get) a job.
- He _____ (not / get) a better job if he _____ (not / pass) that exam.
- I _____ (buy) a new dress if I _____ (have) enough money.



B. Second Conditionals - put the verb into the correct tense:

1. If I _____ (be) you, I _____ (get) a new job.
2. If he _____ (be) younger, he _____ (travel) more.
3. If we _____ (not / be) friends, I _____ (be) angry with you.
4. If I _____ (have) enough money, I _____ (buy) a big house.
5. If she _____ (not / be) always so late, she _____ (be) promoted.
6. She _____ (call) him if she _____ (know) his number.
7. They _____ (go) to Spain on holiday if they _____ (like) hot weather.
8. She _____ (pass) the exam if she _____ (study) more.
9. I _____ (marry) someone famous if I _____ (be) a movie star.
10. We never _____ (be) late again if we _____ (buy) a new car.
11. You _____ (lose) weight if you _____ (eat) less.

C. Third Conditionals Put in the correct third conditional verb form:

- 1) If you _____ (not / be) late, we _____ (not / miss) the bus.
- 2) If she _____ (study), she _____ (pass) the exam.
- 3) If we _____ (arrive) earlier, we _____ (see) John.
- 4) If they _____ (go) to bed early, they _____ (not / wake) up late.
- 5) If he _____ (become) a musician, he _____ (record) a CD.
- 6) If she _____ (go) to art school, she _____ (become) a painter.
- 7) If I _____ (be) born in a different country, I _____ (learn) to speak a different language.
- 8) If she _____ (go) to university, she _____ (study) French.
- 9) If we _____ (not / go) to the party, we _____ (not / meet) them. If he
- 10) _____ (take) the job, he _____ (not / go) travelling.
- 11) He _____ (be) happier if he _____ (stay) at home.
- 12) She _____ (pass) the exam if she _____ (study) harder.



- 13) We _____ (not / get) married if we _____ (not / go) to the same university.
- 14) They _____ (be) late if they _____ (not / take) a taxi.
- 15) She _____ (not / meet) him if she _____ (not / come) to London.

D. MIXED CONDITIONALS

- 1) If we (go) _____ now, we (be) _____ back for dinner in time.
- 2) What (you do) _____ in my position?
- 3) If I (be) _____ you, I (send) _____ the letter as soon as possible.
- 4) She was really lucky! She (die) _____ if they (not see) _____ her.
- 5) I (not need) _____ to study so hard if I (speak) _____ perfect English.
- 6) You (get) _____ a cold if you (not close) _____ the window.
- 7) If she (not phone) _____ her father soon, he (be) _____ worried.
- 8) (You let him in) _____ if he (come) _____ to the party yesterday?
- 9) If she (be) _____ taller, she (be able) _____ to join the basketball team.
- 10) You (be) _____ rich if you (win) _____ the lottery. But this is unlikely.
- 11) You (not be able) _____ to go to New York unless you (get) _____ a visa.
- 12) He (take) _____ away your mobile phone if you (not stop) _____ writing text messages.
- 13) We (be) _____ very happy if you (tell) _____ us about it sooner. But now, it's too late.
- 14) If you (give) _____ me half of your pocket money, I (do) _____ your homework.
- 15) If the weather (be) _____ nice next weekend, we (go) _____ to the beach.

E. Fill in the correct form of the verb in brackets (All Types of Conditionals)

1. If Anne's father gets seriously ill, they _____ (BRING) him to the hospital.



2. If I _____ (BE) you I would pay more attention in class.
3. They _____ (NOT GO) out if they don't get a babysitter.
4. The manager would have fired him if he _____ (HAVE) someone else to replace him.
5. I _____ (LIKE) her more if she hadn't asked such stupid questions.
6. If you _____ (NOT KNOCK) they won't let you in.
7. If I had missed the bus, I _____ (TAKE) a taxi.
8. We will visit the sports centre tomorrow unless it _____ (RAIN).
9. I would have helped him if I _____ (KNOW) that his condition was so bad.
10. He _____ (NOT GO) to the course if it were not so interesting.
11. I _____ (CALL) if I had had his mobile number.
12. If I _____ (WIN) in the lottery I would go on an extended vacation.
13. If I _____ (NOT BE) careful, he would have lost his job.
14. _____ (SHE STAY) at home if I asked her to ?
15. If her daughter _____ (WORK) harder she would pass the exam.
16. If the French lessons had been more interesting , Mary _____ (NOT ATTEND) a different school.
17. He wouldn't have been so happy if he _____ (NOT HAVE) such a good life.
18. If I were a millionaire I _____ (STOP) working at once.
19. If you _____ (MARRY) Peter, you would be happier.
20. I _____ (GIVE) you the news as soon as I get it.

